



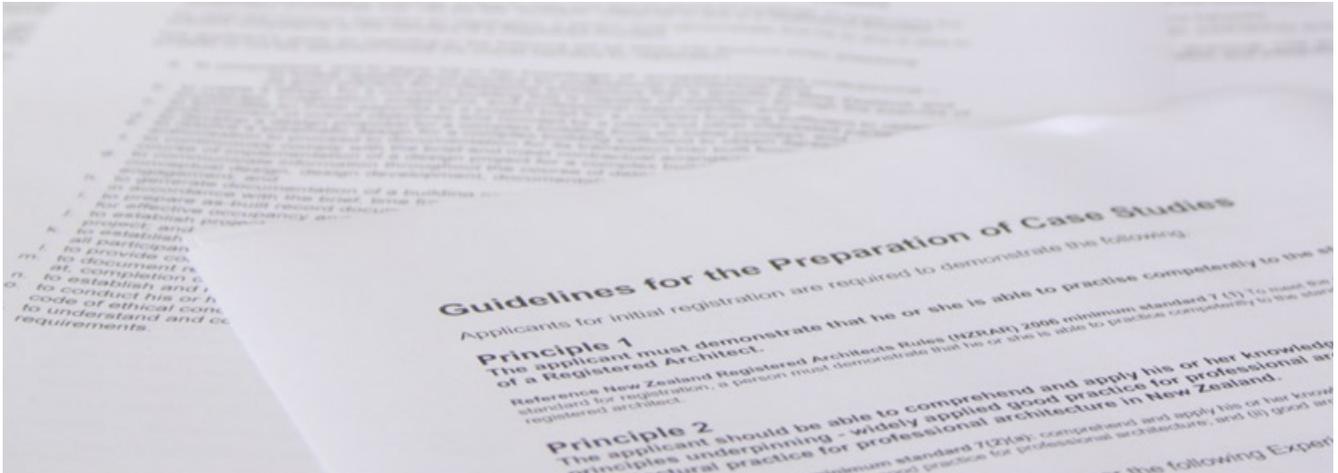
01 2013

THE BROADSHEET OF THE AUCKLAND BRANCH OF THE NEW ZEALAND INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

**BLOCK**

## Just Registration?

### Fortunate Actors in Architecture's Black Comedy



Case study contingency: a willing ally is often the principal guide

For the past several years the fee for sitting registration has been in the order of \$2000.00, but this is currently up for review, with the Registered Architects Board considering lowering it to \$1200.00. In a discussion document released in late 2012, the RAB said the move addressed their concerns of people unnecessarily delaying registration. They felt people were spending too much time preparing their applications and this comment was directed particularly towards the time spent preparing the case studies that are a key document in any application. Graduates are apparently creating excessively detailed applications (presumably a nod towards excessive case studies) and as a consequence they felt some competent people were not applying for registration at all, whilst others were unnecessarily delaying their application. As a second issue, the RAB acknowledged the cost of registration was excessive in comparison to that of other professions and this was also a delaying factor. Rounding out the discussion, the RAB said NZ would benefit if more of the built environment was designed by registered architects – the assumption perhaps being that a 40% reduction in fees will help lift the number of applicants.

The discussion document identified uncertainty amongst graduates as to what a case study is. Clearly, enough people have been getting it wrong that the RAB has been drawn to comment. But what is the nature of their response to this uncertainty? Is the fee change intended to signal a lowering of the expectations of what graduates must produce? Or is it intended to reduce the risks of failure. Is the RAB weighing up whether an application fee of \$1200 will entice graduates who are uncertain about the case study to give it a go earlier than an application fee of \$2000?

One cannot be sure of the tie the RAB sees between the amount of fees and clarity around the case study, but the Board is struggling to offer credible help. If uncertainty about the case study is a problem, it may be helpful to make available a complete model case study in its entirety to all graduates. Or, to go one-step further, make the case study a web-based pro-forma wherein graduates drag-and-drop requested information into a template. This would clarify the case study no end, even more so if there were no room to drag-and-drop anything excessive. Proposals along these lines likely face challenges around the notion of effort (i.e. making the registration process “too easy”), but they highlight the RAB’s struggle to help.

Case studies are discussed at registration workshops and sample chapters addressing one of the required sections are posted on the RAB website. Despite these initiatives, the best way to get help is to find a registered architect who is willing to hand over his or her case study for use as a model. This is a course many applicants follow, but it is one that draws on personal connections and so here we take a step into the realm of contingency. A good way to gain clarity around the case study is contingent on knowing a willing ally. But what are the chances of this? Pretty good you must think, but the fact chance is involved means we must allow that some people will be less fortunate than others.

Case study contingency is symptomatic of a broader scheme of fate and fortune that underlies registration. Fortuity also enters the fray also because the RAB values practically gained knowledge over theoretically gained knowledge, something best explained by considering one of registration’s core competencies – contract administration. During the assessment process, graduates must lead an interview panel through their case study and demonstrate

their experience in contract administration. The documents in the case study support the discussion and provide evidence of the applicant having administered a contract. In keeping with the Greek notion of *praktikos*, the RAB approach values a demonstration of experience and values knowledge gained through action. By way of contrast, and as an example of a more theoretical approach, one could complete Unitec's CONS 6812 Contract Administration paper offered as part of the Bachelor of Construction degree. The course outline indicates that the topics covered are consistent with the Board's competency objectives, though the manner of learning is different. In keeping with the Greek idea of *theoria*, one would likely gain a different kind of knowledge through contemplation and speculation.

Both practical and theoretical kinds of knowledge have their merits and shortcomings. And it is important to acknowledge that in other countries registration boards value contemplation over action, so there are different takes on what to value. The RAB approach, leaning as it does heavily upon the case study and a demonstration of experience, arguably values *praktikos* over *theoria*. The registration process values actors over spectators, but what kind of actors are graduates? To answer this question, we must consider the fateful world in which architecture takes place.

Architecture projects are contingent things, something that Malcolm Walker's cartoons capture well. Walker shows the way in which life's vagaries mark (and, more often than not, prove the downfall of) an architect's vision. He revels in architecture's contingencies – the project scuttled by the absurd planning rule, the design parti set to ruin by the client's hand, the hapless architect caught in a Sisyphean endeavour. All manner of chance happenings wait to scuttle the best-laid plans. And what makes Walker's cartoons so telling is how close they come to experience. The architect is often found at the mercy of Lady Luck and Dame Fortune. And into this black comedy we cast the graduate. And amidst such chance happenings, they set about gaining the right experience to show themselves worthy of registration. In successfully doing so, they show themselves to be fortunate actors.

One can see registration as something prized. It is sort after by graduates and protected by law. If registration is considered a prize, then we can question the way in which that prize is distributed. Questions about the things we prize and the ways in which they are distributed are questions of justice. As such, it is possible to evaluate the registration process in the context of theories of distributive justice and ask how just or otherwise it is.

In a world marked by fortuity, the graduate must be a fortunate actor to gain the type of experience valued by the Board. And their capacity to influence the world to advance their experience is limited. One can have a chat with their employer about gaining experience in a particular competency, but there are no guarantees that a fateful world will offer the opportunities required. Marked by fate and operating beyond the graduate's influence, one can conclude that the opportunities for registration are distributed in an arbitrary manner. This is not an appeal to the derogatory sense of the 'arbitrary'. Rather, drawing on the Latin *arbitarius*, it is to emphasise decision-making stemming from a 'supreme ruler' or 'supreme judge'. It is to acknowledge that the opportunity to gain appropriate experience is largely beyond the graduate's influence.

Every year applicants are fortunately successful, so there is no intent to adopt a defeatist position when describing registration as being distributed in an arbitrary manner. The intention is to describe correctly the process graduates follow and question the extent to which the successful can claim credit for their success. The distribution of registration is based on factors for which graduates can largely claim no credit and, while it may seem a hard-pill to swallow, no malice is intended in this observation. It is a fact of life that the opportunities that have befallen the successful were largely not of their own making and not something for which they can claim credit.

When the distribution of a prize is significantly affected by arbitrary factors then we can say that that prize is gifted to the fortunate, not earned by the deserving. Architectural registration is in large part

gifted. It cannot be captured within a meritocratic model of thought that proceeds from an assumption that everyone starts on a level playing field and from that point on it is one's effort that brings about rewards. The contingent world of architecture is no level playing field. While it may take one graduate four years to gain the experience required, it may take another 14 years, and yet both may put in equal daily effort. It is just that in their jobs one may be fortunate, having the opportunity to gain the experience and knowledge that the Board smiles upon. And while those graduates can largely claim no credit for their success, the less fortunate can largely shoulder no blame. It can be through no fault of their own that the chance world of architecture has seen opportunities pass by.

To recognise registration as something gifted is an important step in recognising that there are more and less fortunate graduates. It is an attempt to accurately name the manner in which registration is distributed. And in recognising this gifted nature, we close in on an evaluation of the registration as being just or otherwise.

Life is neither just nor unjust, says the political philosopher Michael Sandel. What is just or unjust is the way in which institutions handle the realities life throws up. The question then is – how does the RAB deal with the realities of more and less fortunate graduates in a contingent world? This is where we return to the RAB's struggle to help as highlighted in their discussion document. In a just society, institutions implicated in processes that make more and less fortunate groups should be conscious of the need to offer credible help and make every effort in that direction. Signs of a struggle to help or signs of a lack of recognition of a need for help are, potentially, signs of an institution administering an unjust process.

Why should the RAB offer credible help to graduates? Firstly, in working towards help the RAB maintains an appreciation of the arbitrary process they administer and stays in touch with the graduate's world. Secondly, in light of registration's gifted nature, it is a conceit to think that those fortunately successful have earned an honour deserved of their efforts. Similarly, it is a conceit if the RAB believe they bestow honours when their task can be better described as bearing gifts. It is important for the RAB to focus on credible help to minimise the risk of sliding into a conceit of bestowing honours. A Board that understands itself to bear gifts should behave differently towards graduates than one that believes itself to bestow honours.

Unfortunately there are signs of a slide into a meritocratic conceit, though not all blame lies with the RAB. A decision by the NZIA to revise graduate fees exhibits the hardnosed thinking associated with meritocratic thought. The NZIA increased their fees for those unregistered for a long time. The new arrangements see long-term graduate's fees rise towards those of a full member, though without the benefits. How can this change be perceived? Worryingly, it can be seen as a move against graduates thought to be hitching a ride on the back of the NZIA's full members. It looks like a stick rather than carrot approach; one overlooking the contingencies of the graduate's world. But it also overlooks the contingencies of the world in which the full membership moves, so it was surprising the Institute's members allowed the fee change. Perhaps it reflects a more deep-seated conceit that registration is something earned.

One hopes that the RAB does not slip into a meritocratic conceit, believing themselves to bestow honours. However, another instance of "help" presents some worrying signs.

On more than one occasion, RAB representatives have advised graduates that if they are struggling to get the appropriate experience, they should consider resigning from their job and look for employment at a practice where the prospects seem better. This is a hardnosed response that overlooks the contingencies of practice. One can imagine a Malcolm Walker cartoon featuring a forlorn graduate moving from firm to firm in search of the precious experience, foiled each time by fate and fortune. There are no guarantees that changing jobs will achieve anything, or at least not enough of a guarantee to prompt a resignation. And it would be a brave employer who promises registration experience, at least within a certain time frame. Such advice is arguably also

disingenuous to employers who aspire to provide registration experience but who, at times and due to the contingencies of practice, find themselves unable to do so. Everyday employers offer experience in architecture, it is just that it is not always the type of experience the RAB values. And one wonders whether such advice would be offered at workshops if more employers were present amongst the audience of anxious graduates.

Aside from any moral obligation to help the less fortunate there is a market driven imperative too, one that turns around understanding who graduates are.

According to the NZIA's annual report, graduate membership hovers at around 25% of the Institute's total membership. At the end of 2011, there were 622 graduate members. This sizeable group are legally and dutifully bound to denounce any status as architects and must set straight any misconceptions. But alongside making clear statements about not being architects, they can speak with pride about making architecture. We have therefore a group capable of driving a wedge between architects and architecture. Graduates bring to the fore something we all know – the relationship between architects and architecture is a fragile, tenuous connection, but one that serves us well in the public eye.

You don't need to be an architect as defined in legislation and as registered by a Board to make architecture and to speak with pride about making architecture. As such, graduates have a voice that places at risk the value of the term architect, the relevance of the processes used to register architects, and the need for a board to administer those. This may sound like a theoretical risk, but one need only watch the rise of graduates in the Best Awards and the Home of the Year competition to see the emergence of talent who make it clear that they are not architects and yet speak with passion about their architecture. It is vital the RAB offer graduates credible help, lest they continue to divide architects from architecture.

Many years ago, David Mitchell delivered the keynote speech at my graduation ceremony. Considering why he enjoyed being an architect, he said it had a lot to do with architecture's egalitarian nature - there was space for everyone. No matter what your inclination, architecture was such a broad undertaking that there was always an opportunity to carve out a career. I am now in two minds now about this observation. I have talented colleagues who are making their way successfully, both on their own and in architectural practices. They are producing enviable architecture, but many of them do so knowing that they cannot and, for the foreseeable future, will not, call themselves an architect. This will be through no fault of their own; through no lack of effort. But it will have much to do with the nature of the registration process, its valuing of *praktikos* over *theoria*, its requiring a particular kind of experience to be gained in a contingent world and, as demonstrated by the discussion document, a worry that the RAB does not recognise or respond to these realities with credible help. My colleagues must therefore push on, knowing that it is the quality of their work that leads to fulfilment, not a professional title gifted on arbitrary grounds. They must continue to demolish the vulnerable association of architects and architecture.

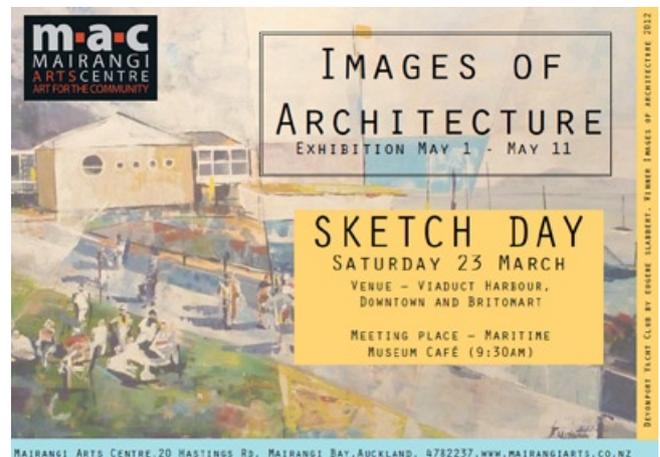
If the RAB are concerned with encouraging graduates to register they could be doing something more productive than writing discussion documents about fees. The Board is represented by individuals who commit their valuable time to advancing the coming generation of architects and for this we must be thankful. But it is important they understand how the process they administer can be seen as unjust unless credible help is offered. There are some positive signs of help in terms of changed procedures for 2013. From this year, a panel will review a graduate's application and look for gaps in experience areas prior to their interview. This will certainly help reduce some of the risk in the process, but what happens after these gaps are identified? More help is required.

Registration faces the risk of being seen as unjust and so the RAB must consider how graduates confronting an unjust process may feel and act. What is it like to watch someone else gain registration based on fortunate opportunities for which they can claim no credit? What is it like to watch others be gifted registration? Those who are not applying for registration or who are delaying their application may not be doing so on the grounds of excessive case study requirements or high fees. They may be disheartened and discouraged by an unjust process. They may be waiting for credible help that addresses the realities of a registration process that creates more and less fortunate graduates. They may be waiting to participate in a just process. SF

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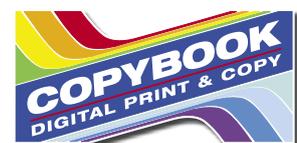
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# The Fine Print: December

## CHIARS REPORT: Richard Goldie

*Communications:* The Branch commends National Office for the bulletin published weekly. Anecdotally this is well received by the members. 2013 is the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Women's' Suffrage. We have been approached by A+W (architecture + women) for funding for the proposed 2013 conference being promoted by A+W, and the Branch has approved this in principle. It has been suggested that the 2013 Architecture Week is coordinated into and by A+W as a part of the celebrations.

*Auckland Council Liaison and Legislative Input Auckland Council Procurement:* John Albert and I met with Kenneth Wooff (Head of AC Procurement), Peter Blackwell (Head of Council Project Management) and Gregory Heap (AC) on 16th November. Prior to the meeting we sent a letter to both Ken and Peter outlining members' concerns. These focused on the current process being confusing for both the Public and Architects, not delivering the best value for the community and not delivering the Auckland Plan's ambitions for a beautiful city. Furthermore architects believe the best person to compete a design is the concept architect. Many are withdrawing from invitations to submit.

The meeting was useful – in summary:

Council use the two stage process for a number of reasons. The concept phase is used to:

- 1) establish a feasibility, and
- 2) engage users and gauge public interest. Many do not proceed beyond the concept stage. Council are extremely shy of competitions after the queens wharf debacle.

They are limited by probity requirements to spending up to \$100k without a public process. Anything more must be tendered.

John and I undertook to get back to the members and come back with ideas. A couple suggested are:

- 1) Keep concept design very conceptual. Clear time frames, scope and fixed deliverables.
- 2) Requesting full fees at CD phase is not unreasonable, if the process required to prepare these is simple – a pro forma perhaps? All CAs have variation processes in them which allow the variations to be fairly assessed and agreed. The council must have some idea of the scope at the outset surely? Even if they benchmarked buildings – e.g. could the Devonport library brief be the benchmarked against the Birkenhead brief? The council could always reserve the right to terminate the project at the end of CD or PD.

We still await ideas from those who have expressed concern and will take these back to Council when received. If you have some please share!

*Building Consenting:* We hear from members and experience growing complexity with the process of Building Consent applications with more and more information being required. Mike Thompson has raised this at the Auckland Council Consumer Advisory Panel he sits on behalf of the Branch, but it appears that Council are powerless to streamline the processes. The issue appears to be that Central Government has required all TA's to now be QA accredited and this has resulted in a checklist mentality from Building Officers that is requiring more and more information with submissions, no matter how relevant. The costs of this are either being absorbed by Architects or passed onto Clients. Either way the cost of compliance is increasing, and this runs counter to Governments stated productivity agenda. It is intended that a high level approach to Auckland Council be made in the new year with a view to simplifying this. The Branch has suggested that National Office raise this matter with Central Government.

*New NZIA Premises:* The premises are complete and staff moved in - looks great. Why not drop in and have a look around? L5, 21 Queen Street.

*Operational Year:* As mentioned above there is a discontinuity between financial year end (31/12/12) and the election of Committee members in March. The Branch has sought Council's view on rationalising this.

*Election of Councillors:* Tim Melville has offered to stand as Auckland Councillor for 2013. The Branch supports his election and we encourage the membership to not contest this. We believe Tim has done a sterling job and his election will continue to serve well the relationship between the Branch and Council. We also believe that with the departure of the CE Tim continuance will help with continuity of governance during the transition period to a new CE.

*Operational Review:* With the departure of the CE we have asked Council to clarify the timing of the proposed Operational Review. We suggest the outcomes of the review might help in the CE search process. Informally we understand that the review will happen after the appointment of the CE.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES: Alec Couchman

*NZIA Auckland Branch EIG Initiative:* Further discussions setting up the *Leadership in Sustainability Prize* (mirroring the RAI A initiative) are on-going. Meeting with the Australasian sponsor before Xmas.

*Auckland Design Manual:* Meeting with Auckland Council to ascertain level of commitment to sustainable actions and initiatives.

*2013 Lecture Series:* Looking to organise more inspiring speakers for next year including RTA, JASMAX, BIG and some interesting non-architects working in related fields.

*NZ Pre-Fab:* Hopefully any Architects travelling near New Plymouth these holidays will take the opportunity to visit the NZ Pre-Fab exhibition at the Puke Ariki Museum

*NZIA Council Environmental Policy Guidelines:* In conjunction with Anne Salmond, Megan Rule and others, we are looking to update and reformat the current NZIA Council Environmental Policy Guidelines that have become slightly dated.

## HERITAGE PORTFOLIO: Adam Wild

*The Mount Eden Pacific Island Presbyterian Church:* This small local congregation of 40 people are responsible for two important historic church buildings which are listed in the District Plan. The Auckland Council has closed the old Hall (1885) as a dangerous building. A tendered price of \$45,000 would see the erection of a temporary support structure to stabilise the building until funds can be sourced for its conservation and return to use for the wider community. Any assistance in securing funds to save the hall and the church (1905) would be gratefully appreciated.

*Earth Building Heritage:* A number of architects helpfully responded to an enquiry from the Earth Architecture Group, Department of Architecture, at the National University of Malaysia I received last month. Questions of philosophic position or technology need to be discussed with respect to those interested in our earth building heritage in New Zealand.

*Post-Grad Building Conservation:* The launch of UNITEC's postgrad course in building conservation in the New Year marks the most important advance in informed discussions on heritage, technologies, materiality, and sustainability in some time.

*Heritage and Urban Issues On Air:* Ponsonby Radio's 107.7fm and on the web at <http://www.radioponsonby.co.nz/> Saturday morning arts and architecture slot rolled it way back round to architecture last weekend and the recent interest in how heritage or character is managed in Brisbane enabled me to ask Barry Copeland from the UIG to join me in pondering Auckland matters on air. This will prove to be a great vehicle for promoting next year's Architecture Week and other architectural issues.

## URBAN ISSUES GROUP Barry Copeland

*Activities in last period include: 5th Nov* – Submission on Draft Auckland Regional Public Transport Plan. *9th Nov* – Meeting with Auckland Council officers drafting Business section of Unitary Plan. *20th Nov* – Presentation by Penny Pirrit assisted by Theresa Walsh of Auckland Council to UIG meeting at D 72. *5th Dec* – Meeting with Property Council to establish a small working group concerned with issues raised by the Unitary Plan. *10th Dec* – Meeting with Auckland Council officers drafting Sustainability section of the UP. *10th Dec* – Meeting with Penny Pirrit and John Duguid re UP residential section

A small working group has emerged during this period, and key issues of concern to our membership are surfacing. Further action expected before Christmas closedown, including UIG committee meeting on 18 December. Progress has been made with Auckland Council to involve NZIA in consultations about the Plan.

## UNITEC STUDENT REPORT: Matthew Roberts & Stu Penno

2012 has been a very successful year for Unitec. It is the first time ever, that Unitec has taken out the NZIA Graphisoft Student Design Awards with Arnika Blount's winning conversion of the Parnell Reservoir into an archaeological Wunderkammer. Along with fellow Unitec SDA finalists Kathryn Collins, Josh McIntosh and Matthew Roberts; the judging panel that consisted of Bergendy Cook, David Sheppard, and Ian Moore made special mention of the high standard of student work this year. Congratulations Arnika.

Unitec's annual *Gradfest* (aka Grad Show) was a well-attended showcase of students work in architecture and proved rewarding for many students, whose talent and achievements were acknowledged.

Thank you to all who have been part of the Department of Architecture for 2012. It has been a truly memorable year.

## ARCHITECTURE PORTFOLIO: Andrew Patterson

*Unitary Plan Advisory Panel:* Only the residential and commercial provisional are detailed. Many views we have expressed seem to have been incorporated into the latest drafts. The main thing that seems to be still at large is a provision for expert review. One suggestion is to incorporate the Auckland Plan specified expert review under assessment criteria for discretionary activities so Architects and designers can rely on this as a backstop.

Other specific items are:

1. *Height to boundary:* We have argued that there should not be a penalty of 55 degrees for the northern boundary and 35 degrees for the southern boundary, essentially the provision just creates private waste of dark space to the south of every home. The AC property needs proper computer analysts to show the effect of this.
2. Have argued that existing windows on adjoining sites should not influence the design of new building on a subject site. In Auckland it is often likely that an adjacent building will be

replaced in time, so these provisions across sites are needlessly complex and will perpetuate any existing spatial mistakes over a long term. My practice has an example of this right now.

3. There are the 'Hamilton Provisions': we have argued the position of garage and garage door rules (that they must be set 5 metres back from the road boundary and 0.5 metres behind the principle residence) will produce sameness and uniformity to design, and stifle innovation. We have argued against making fences a maximum height of 1.2 metres on the front boundary and providing a transparency to them. We have argued that the minimal developed site area should come down.

All these provisions are still there. New things that have appeared include:

- The Auckland Design manual is now being mentioned in the assessment criteria. This may make it a statutory document. Who is going to determine that buildings and structures are of a similar and complimentary scale and appearance to that of other residential buildings? This needs to be resolved.
- We should be arguing something to do with a number of storeys rather than maximum height, maximum height should have a flexible link through to storey height. Agree on minimum and maximum heights.
- In business zones prescriptive % glazing for street frontages risks leaving unoccupied venetian blinds through wide areas of the city, you can see that happening now. Best Practice Urban Design calls for active street frontages and passive security, but this rule seems a blunt instrument.
- Compulsory street height and bulk to achieve building uniformity is rife through the business provisions. You can walk down any vital city in the world (including the Viaduct) and see how this is counter-productive.

Generally: The current Drafts seem to list 'priorities' as "demanding good design" and under 'issues', "sense of place" but arguably the plan focuses more on *retaining* existing sense of place rather than our ability to *develop and create* a sense of place. Pete Bossley and I are interested in feedback.

## EVENTS PORTFOLIO: Andrew Barrie

The last bits and pieces related to Architecture Week 2012 have been processed, and we are now looking forward to 2013. On March 13<sup>th</sup> the Branch will host a lecture by Mark Burry, responsible for the completion of Gaudi's Sagrada Familia, a world authority on digital architecture and design computing, and an excellent speaker. Burry will visit as part of the Dulux Futuna Lecture Series arranged by the Futuna Trust in Wellington.

Next year's Architecture Week will be run in conjunction with Architecture+Women, celebrating the 120<sup>th</sup> year of the women's suffrage movement in NZ, and 20 years since the *Constructive Agenda – 60 Years of Women in Architecture in New Zealand* exhibition in 1993. Dates are yet to be finalised, but will be in late September.

Also on the cards is a lecture tour by exciting Columbian architect, Giancarlo Mazzanti. This will likely be scheduled for October. See [www.giancarlomazanti.com](http://www.giancarlomazanti.com)

## NZIA Calender: February

<b>Tue, 12th</b>	5:30 – 7:00 p.m.	<b>NZIA Environment Issues Group</b> NZIA Auckland D72
<b>Tue, 19th</b>	1:00 – 4:00 p.m.	<b>BRANZ Fire Acceptable Solutions</b> Ellerslie Events Centre ( <a href="http://www.branz.co.nz">http://www.branz.co.nz</a> )
	5:30 – 7:00 p.m.	<b>NZIA Urban Issues Group</b> NZIA Auckland D72
<b>Thu, 21st</b>	5:00 – 7:00 p.m.	<b>The Green Room: Wynyard Quarter Sustainable Strategies</b> Westpac, Takutai Square, CBD ( <a href="http://www.nzgbc.org.nz">http://www.nzgbc.org.nz</a> )
	5:30 – 7:00 p.m.	<b>NZIA Environment Issues Group</b> NZIA Auckland D72